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United Nations reform: measures and proposals: the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations

Regional hearings in preparation for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations: hearing held for the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at Tokyo on 9 and 10 September 1999

Note by the Secretary-General

In preparation for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations and the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, and at the request of the Secretary-General, regional hearings have been convened by the executive secretaries of the five regional commissions for a representative segment of civil society, with the participation of members of the commissions. The purpose of the hearings was to produce proposals aimed at strengthening the role of the Organization and ensuring its continued relevance in the twenty-first century.

The report on the hearing for the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held at Tokyo on 9 and 10 September 1999, is transmitted herewith.

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Hearing held for the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at Tokyo on 9 and 10 September 1999

I. Introduction

1. The hearing for the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), held in preparation for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, was convened at the United Nations University at Tokyo, on 9 and 10 September 1999.

2. The hearing, opened by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Japan, who served as the presiding officer of the meeting, consisted of four working sessions. Three moderators, Ronald Huisken, Department of Defence (Australia) Cielito Habito, The Earth Council (the Philippines), and Razali Ismail, President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly (Malaysia), chaired the sessions devoted to, respectively, the following themes: peace and security; economic and social development; and human rights and good governance. Thirteen panellists introduced the above-mentioned themes. Other participants, representing Member States of the Asia and Pacific region and a cross-section of civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic and research institutions, the media and the private sector, numbered 143.

3. The presiding officer chaired the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as the fourth thematic session. At the latter session, the strengthening of the United Nations was discussed and summaries presented by the above-mentioned moderators were heard. A summary of the outcome of the hearing is set out below.

II. General discussion on the United Nations

4. The hearing noted at the outset that the global challenges of peace, security, development, human rights and good governance confronting mankind were closely interlinked. In effectively addressing these challenges at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it was therefore essential, first of all, to conceptualize and design, at the national, regional and international levels, integrated and coherent policies.

5. The meeting underlined that the United Nations was the only global organization with competencies to address the totality of global concerns and challenges. Moreover, its comparative advantage as the sole organization with quasi-universal membership and wide mandates, an extensive network in countries and territories and linkages and partnerships with various sections of the civil society compelled the United Nations to further its leadership role and activities for the betterment of the human condition, particularly in the developing world.

6. In view of the changing circumstances and emerging challenges, the hearing considered that a revitalized United Nations was urgently required. It was noted that the rapid process of globalization of the international economy had, inter alia, exposed the limitations of national Governments in solving increasingly complex problems. This recent development had triggered an increased demand for international public goods, including a peaceful and stable environment, stable and transparent markets and economic processes, equitable development, environment preservation and the promotion of human rights and good governance.

7. To meet these diverse challenges and aspirations, the revitalization of the United Nations presupposed a genuine reiteration by Member States of their commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and its objectives, which must translate into the effective individual and collective exercise of the responsibilities of all Members in pursuance of the Charter. In this connection, it was emphasized that responsible membership entailed the design of rational mandates and the timely endowment of resources for the effective execution of those mandates.

8. The meeting also recognized that, in view of the presence of other multilateral organizations with specialized mandates, such as the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, as well as the limitation of resources, the United Nations should develop its leadership role in the resolution of global challenges. It should provide the

vision, set the agenda, prescribe standards, monitor and evaluate progress and foster global partnership, encompassing international, regional, subregional and national as well as business and civil society organizations.

9. The meeting also took note of the revival of proposals for the direct participation of people and recalled that the Preamble to the Charter starts with the sentence "We, the peoples of the United Nations, determined to ...". These proposals included the establishment of a world parliament directly elected by the people, an advisory body to the General Assembly comprised of eminent personalities and the establishment of the World NGO Forum.

III. Peace and security

10. The meeting noted that threats to peace, as well as political instability and social unrest were often rooted in conditions of underdevelopment, poverty, inequality and poor governance. To offset these threats, it was recognized that the promotion of equitable social and economic development and good governance was not for its own sake alone, but because it was the best guarantor of peace and security. In this respect, it was deemed important to promote a partnership framework between the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, Governments and civil society at large, with a view to ensuring the maintenance of peace and security.

11. During the last decade, the world has witnessed major changes that have significant bearing on the effective maintenance of peace and security. The following developments were considered to have had a profound impact on the future role of the United Nations in the area of peace and security:

(a) The end of the so-called cold war and, with it, the abated risk of strategic nuclear war;

(b) The drastic reduction of inter-State wars and the high incidence of intra-State disputes and conflicts, often along ethnic rather than ideological lines;

(c) An international political landscape characterized by localized zones of active or latent turmoil;

(d) The reconsideration of the basis of the concept of national security over international security and, as a corollary, of the concept of national sovereignty;

(e) The tendency of localized conflicts to reach subregional dimensions and the risks they pose to international peace and security;

(f) The drastic rise of international terrorism and international crime, including trafficking in women and in narcotic drugs, all of which impinge on human security;

(g) The relative shift of economic and financial power;

(h) The volatility of international capital markets.

12. While noting that the above-listed developments brought about new challenges related to the maintenance of peace and security, the hearing underlined that many threats associated with the so-called cold war, such as nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, remain a constant concern.

13. The meeting reiterated that the United Nations was the only global organization dealing with peace and security. Its active role was, therefore, indispensable in managing global peace and security, including the timely and effective actions against State and non-State actors pursuing actions in violation of the Charter, international law and international humanitarian law.

14. The meeting called first and foremost for a systemic reform of the Security Council, the principal organ entrusted with the maintenance of peace and security, which should include enlarged membership of the Council with a view to reflecting and representing the current international and regional balance of economic and military power. A call was also made for a transparent decision-making modus operandi of the Council.

15. Regarding the representativeness of the Security Council, the meeting underlined that the Asia and Pacific region had been particularly under-represented in that organ.

16. The hearing held the view that some permanent members of the Council had made abusive use of their veto power. It recommended that the use of veto prerogatives be qualified and that, moreover, the General Assembly fully assume its present legislative responsibility with respect to the maintenance of peace

and security and that it be granted oversight capacity for the Security Council.

17. The hearing was of the opinion that, in exercising its mandate, the Security Council should be more proactive in preventing conflict. In other words, its efforts towards peacemaking rather than simply peacekeeping should be enhanced and pre-emptive diplomacy should be accorded a higher priority, in line with chapter VI of the Charter on the pacific settlement of disputes. In addition, attention should be paid to the development of an effective peace and security information system, including a robust early-warning system capable of detecting threats to peace or other forms of insecurity and more frequent use of private diplomacy and regional security arrangements should be encouraged to prevent conflicts. The meeting also recognized that the Asia and Pacific region still lacks a viable region-wide security arrangement.

18. The meeting noted the increase in intra-State conflicts, often characterized by gross violations of the principles of international humanitarian law, including the targeting of civilian populations and children. Regarding intervention, including military intervention, to resolve such conflicts on humanitarian grounds, the consensus was that such intervention should be governed by clear and transparent policies and procedures within the framework of the United Nations.

19. The meeting recommended that in order for the United Nations to be efficient and effective, it should be endowed with adequate resources, including the availability of rapid deployment military forces at the disposal of the Security Council.

20. A number of unfinished items, namely disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, remain on the agenda of the United Nations. The meeting felt that a world platform for multilateral disarmament should take precedence over bilateral agreements and that the role of the Security Council in setting the agenda and priorities for effective disarmament should be strengthened.

21. The United Nations should also pay more attention and devote more resources towards the elimination of international terrorism and crime, which has been rising rapidly, particularly in recent times. As this activity is often linked to drug trafficking and money laundering, measures aimed at controlling those activities are urgently needed.

IV. Economic and social development

22. The meeting noted that globalization provides new opportunities for growth and development worldwide through the much freer flow of goods, services, technology, capital and information and, more generally, through the creation of conditions conducive to the more efficient functioning of competitive markets. In view of the frequent failure of markets to yield equitable development, the hearing underlined that, especially in recent years, globalization has been accompanied by widening income disparities among, as well as within, countries and regions. The major challenge was to seek ways to reap the benefits of globalization while mitigating its ill effects, especially those affecting the most vulnerable and marginalized nations and segments of society. In this context, the role of the United Nations was crucial.

23. The meeting underscored that poverty eradication remained an unattained goal of international development cooperation. Despite its rapid growth, the Asia and Pacific region was still the home to the majority of the world's poor. Moreover, the rapidly ageing structure of the population has become an impending challenge for the twenty-first century.

24. A holistic approach to development was essential in addressing the challenges posed by, inter alia, poverty, rapid urbanization, and ageing populations. In implementing its mandates pertaining to these problems, the United Nations should provide a global vision, set standards and guidelines and catalyse actions by other involved institutions and stakeholders. In view of its comprehensive mandates, representativeness, quasi-universal membership, structure and linkages with various segments of the society throughout the world, the United Nations was considered to be uniquely poised to address new challenges.

25. The hearing pointed out that in such an increasingly complex world, no single national Government or agency was capable of comprehensive and integrated development. The United Nations, therefore, was called upon to strengthen its development partnership framework through closer coordination and collaboration with various multilateral organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, and to foster closer cooperation among its own bodies, including the specialized agencies.

26. The meeting further stressed that sustainable development required a partnership among all stakeholders in development, namely national Governments, the private sector, NGOs and other civil society organizations. The partnership needed to materialize at all levels of interaction, local, national, regional and global, and at each stage of the development process encompassing planning and policy-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The United Nations should contribute to strengthening such partnerships.

27. It was noted that the process of globalization generated a rise in the demand for international public goods. As the role of the United Nations was critical in facilitating or providing them, a strengthened Economic and Social Council would be indispensable for that purpose. In this regard, there was a need to change the composition and scheduled sessions of the Council so as to enable in-depth substantive deliberations of items on its agenda. The view was expressed that it was incumbent upon the international community to reaffirm the leadership role of the Council in economic and social matters, as well as its function of coordinating the specialized agencies.

28. The view was also expressed that permanent committees under the Economic and Social Council, such as a "Committee on Economic Development" and a "Committee on the Environment", could be established. Also, panels of independent experts should be constituted to advise the Council in dealing with such issues as short-term capital flow, rising global monopolies, poverty eradication, micro-credit support, counter-productive tax competition among countries and youth-related and disability-related matters.

29. Development requires sound institutions. Indeed, there has been a recent heightened recognition of the critical role of institutions in promoting successful development. In this regard, owing to its role as a neutral partner, the United Nations was in the best position to provide technical expertise in areas of institutional capacity-building in developing countries. This included capacity-building in the field of macroeconomic management as well as other areas of governance.

30. The hearing considered that access to knowledge, technology and information was critical to local communities and to developing countries for the promotion of better living conditions for all peoples. It was recognized, however, that inequality of access to, or lack of, technology and information may be an even greater factor than income disparities between industrialized and developing countries in furthering the growing gap between them. The United Nations was called upon to assume critical and much needed leadership in addressing these imbalances.

31. The hearing advocated a sounder and stronger financial base for the United Nations if it is to live up to the challenges of the twenty-first century and to the expectations of the peoples it represents. A sustainable financial resource base needed to be set up, which would include the payment of membership dues based on capability.

V. Human rights and good governance

32. The meeting noted that human rights and good governance were critical subjects of our time and that the region was strongly committed to universal values of human rights. As human rights were indivisible, the promotion of civil and political rights should be carried out in tandem with the promotion of the right to development, including equitable access to health, education and other social services. Indeed, human rights could not flourish in the absence of development, democratic institutions and good governance. Poverty, it was emphasized, was a gross violation of human rights. Countries should be encouraged to set time-bound targets for the elimination of poverty and for the upholding of other economic, social and cultural rights of people.

33. Effective enforcement of human rights required public awareness of such rights, effective monitoring institutions and continued advocacy by various segments of the society, including NGOs. In this respect, it was noted that serious gaps at the national level were evident. These shortcomings were also to be found at the regional and subregional levels where human rights had not been granted sufficient importance on the agenda of regional collaborative initiatives.

34. The meeting recalled that transparency, accountability and adherence to the rule of law and participatory political and social processes were fundamental elements of successful governance. In

many instances, however, these principles were being heralded and complied with on a pro forma basis.

35. Special measures to address the challenges faced by vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled were necessary given the lack of adherence to national and international legal instruments and guidelines promoting equal access and opportunities for these vulnerable groups. It was further noted that armed conflict and other forms of violence impacted more severely on children, women and older people and entailed serious psychosocial traumas and physical disabilities on these segments of civilian populations.

36. It was emphasized that women were caring for the young and the elderly to a disproportionate degree and were being inadequately compensated for their labour. This reality, which was further exacerbating gender-biased inequalities and hampering social development, required proper attention.

37. The hearing rejected the Western-centred interpretation of the discourse on Asian values as a negation or rejection of individual rights. It recalled that, whereas Western thinking on human rights generally placed a distinct emphasis on individual political and civil rights, Asian thinking on the subject was predicated on more communitarian values and principles. In this regard, the United Nations was called upon to calibrate its efforts and human rights activities to take the values of different civilizations and cultures into account and to dovetail the promotion of individual and communitarian human rights principles.

38. The hearing recognized the immense contribution made by, or under the aegis of, the United Nations to the promotion of human rights and good governance by the setting of norms and the development of international human rights instruments; however, the Organization's ability to monitor and ensure compliance with legal obligations needed to be enhanced.

39. In this respect, the United Nations should also be encouraged to promote and support the formation of human rights organizations at the national and regional level and to provide technical assistance to Governments as well as to the media and civil society organizations to strengthen their respective monitoring capacities. Moreover, the United Nations should be endowed with adequate resources and vested with appropriate authority to take adequate measures in the event of massive gross violations of human rights.

VI. Concluding remarks

40. During the last decade, in particular, the Asia and Pacific region has experienced a period of relative peace and, until recently, rapid and equitable economic growth. The region still faces, however, enormous challenges regarding peace and human development in the twenty-first century as trouble spots in the region, both between and within countries, posing potential serious threats to peace and security, remain. Widespread poverty and inequality, challenging peace, violations of human dignity and social stability and environmental degradation, hampering sustainable development, are serious problems with consequential negative long-term effects. To respond to these problems, a serious, integrated and holistic approach to development, necessitating a broad vision and firm action by Governments, peoples and supra-national bodies, needs to be collectively and collaboratively pursued. No single Government would have the capacity and wherewithal to handle these problems alone.

41. The support for the United Nations and its objectives, as embodied in its Charter, remains overwhelmingly strong in the Asia and Pacific region. Indeed, the hearing underscored that the United Nations was a source of great hope for humankind. The Organization, therefore, required support and resources and, against the background of its many shortcomings in exercising its mandates, the hearing urged a serious effort towards a systemic reform of the Organization.

42. The hearing felt that the participation of the Asia and Pacific region in the United Nations processes was not commensurate to the relative political, economic and social importance of the region and appealed to Governments and civil society in the region to enhance participation and contribution to all workings of the United Nations.

43. The hearing also supported increased participation of civil society organizations in the workings of the United Nations. It considered that proposals towards a permanent civil society assembly or a world parliamentary assembly, organically linked to the General Assembly, with a view to reinforcing the ownership of the United Nations by the people of the world, merited serious consideration.

Annex I

Hearing for the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held in preparation for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations

Programme of work

Thursday, 9 September 1999

08:30-09:30	Registration
09:30-10:00	Opening ceremony Statement by Hans van Ginkel, Rector, United Nations University, Tokyo Statement by Adrianus Mooy, Executive Secretary, ESCAP Statement by Miles Stoby, Assistant Secretary-General, Coordinator of Preparations for the Millennium Assembly, United Nations Secretariat Keynote address by Nobutaka Machimura, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Presiding Officer of the Regional Hearing
10:00-10:15	"The United Nations in the 21st Century" Presentation by Yozo Yokota, Japan Association for United Nations Studies (JAUNS)
10:30-13:30	First session: Peace and security Moderator: Ron Huisken, International Policy Division, Department of Defense, Australia Introductory statements: Li Daoyu, Former Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations and the United States of America Satish Kumar, former Professor, Jawaharla Nehru University, India Ijaz Hussain, Professor and Chairman, Department of International Relations, Quaid-I-Azam University, Pakistan Mitsuru Kurosawa, Professor and Dean of Osaka School of International Public Policy, Osaka University
11:15-13:30	Discussions
15:00-18:00	Second session: Economic and social development Moderator: Cielito Habito, Earth Council, Manila, The Philippines Introductory statements: Ryokichi Hirono, Professor Emeritus, Seikei University, Japan Pawadee Tonguthai, Professor, Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, Bangkok Jim Waroka, Deputy Director, Solomon Island Development Trust, Solomon Islands Hak-Su Kim, Ambassador for International Economic Affairs, Republic of Korea
16:00-18:00	Discussions

Friday, 10 September 1999

10:00-13:00	Third session: Human rights and good governance Moderator: Razali Ismail, President, 50th Session of the General Assembly,Malaysia
	Introductory statements: Mohan Man Sainju, Chairman, Institute for Integrated Development Studies, Nepal Rosalinda V. Tirona, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, Manila Ms Ching Chabo, Director, Economic and Social Policy Department, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
11:00-13:00	Discussions
14:30-17:00	Fourth session: Strengthening the United Nations Presiding Officer: Nobutaka Machimura, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan
14:30-15:15	Special presentation: Hisashi Owada, President, Japan Institute of International Affairs
	Concluding remarks on Session 1: Ron Huisken , Moderator of Session 1 Concluding remarks on Session 2: Cielito Habito , Moderator of Session 2 Concluding remarks on Session 3: Razali Ismail , Moderator of Session 3
15:15-17:00	Discussions
17:15-18:00	Conclusions and Closing ceremony Nobutaka Machimura, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Japan Presiding Officer of the Regional Hearing for Asia and the Pacific
	Adrianus Mooy, Executive Secretary, ESCAP Miles Stoby, Coordinator of the Millennium Assembly, United Nations Hans van Ginkel, Rector, United Nations University, Tokyo

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Annex II

List of panellists and participants

Hearing for the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held in preparation for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, Tokyo, 9 and 10 September 1999

A. Member of the Commission

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Mr John Quinn, Minister Counsellor, Australian Embassy

Bangladesh

H.E. Mr Jamil Majid, Ambassador, Bangladesh Embassy, Tokyo

Mr A.F.M. Sarwar Kamal, Economic Minister, Bangladesh Embassy, Tokyo

Mr A.K.M. Nashirul Huq, Deputy Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Dhaka

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Nepal:

Mr Narayan Shumsher Thapa, Special Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kathmandu, Nepal

Pakistan:

Mr Fida Hussain, Economic Minister, Embassy of Pakistan, Tokyo

Philippines:

Hon Ms Rosalinda V. Tirona, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, Manila

Mr Julius Torres, Department of Foreign Affairs, Manila

Mr Benito B. Valeriano, Minister and Consul General, Embassy of the Philippines, Tokyo

Mr Meynardo LB Montealegre, Embassy of the Philippines, Tokyo

Republic of Korea:

Mr Hong-ghi Choi, Deputy Director, United Nations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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B. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 30
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 15 February 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Bucharest Declaration of the Third Meeting of Heads of State and Government of South-East European Countries, adopted on 12 February 2000 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 30, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ion GORITZA
Ambassador

00-30266 (E) 180200

Annex

BUCHAREST DECLARATION OF THE THIRD MEETING OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

12 February 2000

We, the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European countries, Mr. Emil Constantinescu, Mr. Bülent Ecevit, Mr. Ljubco Georgievski, Mr. Mugur Isărescu, Mr. Ivan Kostov, Mr. Ilir Meta and Mr. Costas Simitis, met in Bucharest on 12 February 2000, at the Third Summit of the countries of this region. Present at the meeting were the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of these countries, Mr. Ismail Cem, Mr. Aleksandar Dimitrov, Mrs. Nadezhda Mihaylova, Mr. Paskal Milo, Mr. George Papandreou and Mr. Petre Roman, as well as Mr. Jadranko Prlić and Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak as observers and Mr. Bodo Hombach, special coordinator of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, as a special guest of the Chairman-in-Office.

This Third Summit of the countries of South-Eastern Europe constituted for us a new opportunity to continue our comprehensive dialogue. We have examined the prospects for enhanced stability, security and democracy in our region during the year 2000, a matter that concerns not only us, but also the whole European and Euro-Atlantic community. We have also considered ways and means to foster regional cooperation, aimed particularly at the economic and social growth of our countries and, in this context, the impact the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe could have on the progress and the prosperity of our region.

On the eve of the Third Millennium, we have reiterated the European orientation of our countries as an integral part of their objectives for political, economic and social development. It is our firm conviction that Europe cannot be complete without the countries of South-Eastern Europe, without their peoples representing old civilizations and cultures that have traditionally contributed to the formation of the contemporary European identity, enriching the European culture. We welcome the intensified efforts for widening European integration and we emphasize the needs for including the countries of the region in the process of deepening and broadening the European and Euro-Atlantic political, security and economic structures. Our endeavors to promote regional cooperation are also directly linked with the aspirations of our countries to speed up their integration in these structures.

In this last year of a century marked by devastating wars and conflicts, many of them originating from and affecting our region, as well as by dictatorial political regimes, we have signed today a Charter on Good Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, aimed at opening a new page in the history of our

region, whose future lies in peace, democracy, economic prosperity and full integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The Charter emphasizes our commitment for economic and democratic reforms. This Charter constitutes a genuine Code of Conduct for the relations among our countries and, at the same time, a real Action Program for our future cooperation in all areas of mutual interest. This Charter is the first common political document of this nature in the modern history of our region. Opened for the participation of all the countries belonging to the South-Eastern part of Europe, this Charter constitutes also a major political contribution of our countries to the implementation of the principles and the objectives of the Stability Pact.

While reviewing the state of our cooperation, as a major initiative coming from within the region, we have taken note with satisfaction of the large international recognition it received during the year 1999. The South-East European Cooperation Process was accepted by the last NATO Summit in Washington as contributing to the Alliance's effort to enhance regional security and was invited to be among the contributors to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. OSCE, reiterated at the Istanbul Summit in November its determination to work closely with other international organizations and institutions on the basis of the Platform for Co-operative Security for the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area. In this context, we welcome the designation of a country from our region, Romania, as the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE in 2001 and a member of the OSCE Troika starting with the year 2000.

In this framework, we fully recognize our countries' responsibility to work within the international community to develop a shared strategy for stability and growth in this region and to cooperate with each other and with the international community to implement that strategy. At the beginning of year 2000, we solemnly declare that we are ready to assume our duties and to actively participate, alongside with the international community at large, in the peaceful settlement of the tensions and conflicts in our area and in preventing the breaking out of new conflicts in South-Eastern Europe. We are determined to further consolidate our cooperation and to do our utmost so that the end of this century marks the end of wars in our region, and that the shared Euro-Atlantic values of peace, democracy, prosperity and respect for human rights take root in South-Eastern Europe.

At the same time, convinced that the full normalization of the bilateral relations between all the states in the region plays a role of paramount importance in building up a climate of confidence and mutual understanding, we are determined to make every effort during the year 2000 to reach this goal. In this context, we encourage further simplification of the formalities in order to facilitate the circulation of persons, goods and capitals among our countries, and with the rest of Europe within the framework of the existing international obligations.

We are all concerned with the fact that the situation in some parts of our area continues to pose potential threats to the stability and security in the region. In spite of the international community's efforts, the prerequisites for a democratic and sustainable development are still to be achieved. The evolution of the situation in Kosovo will continue to influence the state-to-state and interethnic relations in the area and consequently the whole region. Against the background of years of repression, intolerance and violence in Kosovo, the challenge is now to build a democratic, multi-

ethnic and multi-cultural society, on the basis of substantial autonomy, taking full account of the Rambouillet accords, as well as the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, pending on a final settlement in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1244. Our countries have firmly supported this Resolution, which we expect to be fully implemented and strictly adhered to by all concerned. We reiterate today our conviction that this Resolution constitutes the solid base for a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Kosovo crisis. We reconfirm our countries' commitment to contribute, to the extent of their capabilities, towards achieving this objective.

Our countries strongly support the international civil and security presences in Kosovo, through the UNMIK, the KFOR, and the OSCE mission and we hope that they will be provided with the necessary resources and means to perform their duties. We welcome the high priority attached by them to guaranteeing security to all citizens in Kosovo, irrespective of their ethnic, religious or cultural background, so that all the residents of this province could contribute to and benefit from the creation of a peaceful and democratic society. While taking note of the improvement in the security climate in Kosovo, we strongly condemn the continuation of ethnically motivated violence, intolerance or threats, by the activity of various organized crime structures and/or individuals still present in the area and by other negative developments. We welcome the action taken by the international presence in Kosovo, for the implementation of all the provisions of the Resolution 1244, including strengthening the legal and institutional framework for assuring the public order and preparing local elections during this year. Considering that the administration of Kosovo should be carried on with the participation of the local population, we appeal to their leaders to work together and with the representatives of the international presences there, towards creating a multi-ethnic society where the rights of all citizens, all ethnic and religious communities are fully and equally respected.

At the OSCE Summit in Istanbul, last November, it was agreed that the democratic shortcomings of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remain one of the fundamental sources of grave concern in our region. All responsible democratic political forces of this country must steer the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia firmly back on the path towards democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are now making an appeal to all the citizens of this country to embark upon a course of democracy and reconciliation, in order to bring back this state in the family of the international community. Our countries are ready to further promote the humanitarian assistance programs directed to the citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, such as the EU "Energy for Democracy" and the twinning projects, in order to alleviate the impact of the sanctions on the population. We insist that no restrictions should be applied by the authorities to humanitarian operations on their territory. In this context, while considering the sanctions against FRY as an important mean for achieving the common objectives of the international community, we share the view that their implementation should avoid to the extent possible direct negative consequences on the Yugoslav citizens. We regret that prevailing circumstances precluded the presence of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at this Summit, while reiterating the FRY's status as a participating country to the SEECP, in accordance with the provisions of the Crete and Antalya Summits documents. We agree to consider the FRY's chair as temporarily vacant, to be resumed as soon a onditions would allow it.

Our previous Summits dealt largely with the evolution of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an observer state to the SEECP, considered as a test–case for Europe. We remain committed to a democratic, multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the General Framework Agreement for Peace negotiated in Dayton and signed in Paris. We underline the importance of improving the functioning of this country's common institutions and of the continuing assumption of the tasks undertaken now by the international community. We appeal to the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take decisive steps to bring its two entities closer together within their single state, in the interest of its citizens, of its stability and prosperity.

We reaffirm the particular importance of increased cooperation with NATO on security matters in the region, by participating in its specific mechanisms such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Partnership for Peace Program and the Consultative Forum on Security Matters launched by the Alliance following its Washington Summit. We commend the role of the South-Eastern Europe Defense Ministerial for the security dimension of our countries' cooperation and the activation of the Multinational Peace Force/South-Eastern Europe Headquarters established on a rotational basis in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. We are looking forward to the building up of the European Security and Defense Identity within the Alliance and declare our countries' willingness to cooperate with it. We welcome the adoption by the recent OSCE Summit in Istanbul of the Charter for European Security and, as OSCE participating countries, we reconfirm the commitments assumed herewith.

Our countries pay a great deal of attention to enhancing regional cooperation in fighting organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking and all forms of terrorism. In this context, we have been pleased to visit the SECI Regional Center for the Combating of Transborder Crime in Bucharest and we reconfirm our countries' determination to fully cooperate with this Center to attain our common goals in this field.

We express our appreciation to the European Union for launching the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe aimed at sustaining the countries in our region in their efforts to foster peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity, in order to achieve stability in the whole area. We appreciate the first practical steps taken for the implementation of the Pact, in particular the first rounds of negotiations of the specific mechanisms of the Pact. In this context, we welcome the meeting of the Working Table on Economic Reconstruction, Development and Cooperation held recently in Skopje. We also welcome the commitments made by the Greek Government and the European Commission to allocate financial resources for future projects within the Stability Pact and we hope that the other Facilitator States and International Financing Institutions will act in the same direction. We acknowledge with satisfaction the establishment in Thessaloniki of the European Agency for Reconstruction, with a branch office in Pristina. We hope that new operational centers and branch offices will be established in each of the other countries in the region. We welcome the recent agreement in Brussels reached by Bulgaria and Romania, with the assistance of the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact and the European Commission, which constitutes the solution concerning the construction of a second bridge between these countries on the Danube river, as a first successful step in the implementation of major regional projects under the aegis of the Stability Pact.

Seven months after the launching of the Stability Pact, the implementation process is still at its beginning. We look forward to speedy action in the implementation of the various regional projects put in motion by the Working Tables. In this respect, we look to the Regional Financing Conference as a major test of the commitment by the international community to assisting the transition and the development of our countries towards stable democracies and open and viable economies, and to give a strong impetus to the implementation of the Stability Pact projects towards the level of the hopes of our peoples. We reiterate our strong commitment to reform and to carrying out the reform processes endorsed by the Stability Pact, starting with the investment compact and the anti-corruption initiative, as a pledge to the new and equal partnership brought about by the Pact. While understanding the long-term nature of the Pact, the lack of quick concrete results would jeopardize the credibility of the Stability Pact within the public opinion of our countries. We therefore call on the international community to live up to the expectations created by the Pact and respond adequately to the real needs of our countries and our region. Without underestimating the other dimensions of the Pact, we place a strong emphasis on its economic dimension, which will require the biggest share of the financial resources. We hope that transparency for project evaluation, selection, approval and financing shall be assured so that the implementation of projects under the aegis of the Stability Pact starts as soon as possible. Our countries will make the utmost efforts to fulfil the responsibilities assumed in the Stability Pact. We also believe that financing the reform process will be paramount to its success and will significantly contribute to the improvement of the business climate in South-Eastern Europe.

We have stressed our countries' willingness, as participants in the Stability Pact, to be actively involved in projects for reconstruction in Montenegro and Kosovo, FRY, as early beneficiaries of the Stability Pact, as well as in the rest of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, when conditions would permit it. Our countries' interests are also going towards promoting major regional infrastructure projects supporting the economic development of South-Eastern Europe, securing international support for increasing trade in the area and for creating a friendly investment climate, aimed at enhancing cross-border cooperation and achieving sustainable growth in the region. We have noted with interest the commitment made by the major facilitators of the Stability Pact to develop specific tools to allow an active participation of companies from our countries in procurement and services for reconstruction and development projects in the region, through fair and transparent competition, according to multilaterally agreed principles.

We positively appreciate the recent involvement of the European Commission in the efforts for restoring the navigation on the Danube, by offering financial assistance to the Danube Commission for this purpose and look forward to the early implementation of this initiative. The Yugoslav authorities should respect their obligations stemming from the Belgrade Convention of 1948 to facilitate the international efforts to this end. We expect that this major European waterway be soon reopened for free navigation in the Novi Sad area, to the benefit of promoting European trade. We also hope, while embarking effectively upon the implementation of the Stability Pact, that solutions will be found for direct or indirect compensation of the losses our countries registered as a result of the conflict in Kosovo, starting with the two most affected states, as well as for taking progressive steps towards the alleviation of the negative effects on the economy of our countries by the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Bearing in mind the role and the potential of the SEECP in promoting a common approach aimed at fostering regional cooperation, we have substantiated the efforts made within our initiative to harmonize and coordinate the positions of the participating countries towards the implementation of the Stability Pact. The document "Preliminary Proposals of the SEECP Countries for the Stability Pact" provided a first joint platform outlining the common needs and expectations of our countries from the Stability Pact. We reaffirm the primary responsibility of our countries for achieving the goals of the Stability Pact, including their involvement in the current decision making process to set up the priorities of regional projects, for a proper allocation of resources. We believe that SEECP is in the position to fully participate in the establishment of priorities of such projects, whether they are promoted by the interested countries or they are on the lists of other regional initiatives our countries are participating in. We task the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of our countries with preparing suggestions for a specific SEECP mechanism that will set the priorities for regional projects in the Stability Pact framework, with the view to preparing an Action Plan for their implementation.

We have highly appreciated the activities carried on within the SEECP by our countries' Ministers of Foreign Affairs since the last SEECP Summit in Antalya, which contributed to a great extent to the promotion of this regional initiative in the international community. We have also commended the industrious work of the political directors.

We express our warm thanks for the hospitality of Romania for hosting the Bucharest Summit Meeting of the South-East European Cooperation Process.

We have decided that the next meeting of Heads of State and Government of the participating countries to the SEECP will take place in Skopje at the beginning of year 2001.